



# TOWN OF MILLIS

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March 27, 2023

The Honorable Maura Healey, Governor  
State House  
Office of the Governor, Room 360  
Boston, MA 02133

### **RE: State Aid for Special Education**

Dear Governor Healey,

We hope this letter finds you well. We are writing this letter to convey to you what a dire situation the Town of Millis is currently facing, in the hope that you may be able to assist us in avoiding an educational catastrophe in our local school system.

Our town is facing the possibility of mass layoffs of teaching staff due to a very large budget shortfall. This is primarily due to a severe and unexpected spike in special education (SPED) tuition. As we're sure that you're aware, the Commonwealth has allowed private special education institutions to raise their tuition by 14%. In Millis, this has been exacerbated by the need to hire a large number of mandated SPED staff to manage our growing in-district special education needs, as well as the drivers to transport these students. The result of all of these increases in special education costs is that the Millis Schools are facing a deficit of over \$1.6 million in FY24. Combining that with a major loss of School Choice Funds, and a net loss in Local Aid (from FY23 to FY24) has led to a deficit of over \$2 million.

If the town cannot find a way to bridge that funding gap, the school will be forced to reduce general education staff by 27.5 full time employees in FY24. This would undoubtedly cripple our small school system.

There must be action taken to better fund Special Education in Massachusetts. The current funding formulas in this system are clearly not working. Communities like Millis are truly suffering, and those that will suffer the most are our youngest citizens, our students.

We are imploring you to provide what possible assistance you can to alleviate this situation. This would include emergency funding that could be accessed in time to avoid these devastating layoffs. We are fully aware that this issue is not going to go away next year. We

will certainly be facing the same (or worse) budget crisis in Fiscal Year 2025, and this cannot continue. It is not sustainable for any town.

Our teachers work hard for our students and many live in our town as well. Our students deserve the best educational opportunities possible, and with any cuts in staff, those opportunities quickly vanish. All students deserve to be provided with what they need to be successful, and we must protect all of our students including our students with special needs. Please help us find a way to properly address this crisis so that we can retain our wonderful teachers and maintain the excellence that we have long known in our school system.

We sincerely thank you for your consideration.

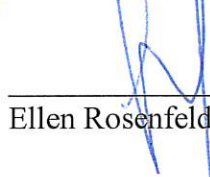
Respectfully,



Erin Underhill, Chair



Craig Schultze, Vice Chair



Ellen Rosenfeld, Clerk

Cc: Senator Rebecca Rausch  
Representative James Arena-DeRosa  
Representative Marcus Vaughn